

# The Self Help Enigma

*An investigation into whether self-improvement and Stoicism are misrepresented or closely associated with toxic masculinity in modern society and its impact on young adults*

## Contents Page

<b>Title Page</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Contents Page</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Log</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Self Harm Influencers.....	7
<b>Chapter 2</b> .....	<b>10</b>
“Don’t Be So Stoic”.....	10
<b>Chapter 3</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Men Don’t Cry.....	14
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Annotated Reference List</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Primary Resources:.....	20
Secondary Resources:.....	23

## Introduction

Self-improvement is a relatively new concept. One that can commonly be misunderstood in our modern society and frequently associated with terms such as “Stoic” and “Loner”. As someone who identifies as being on the road to self-improvement, I felt the need to discover what it really means to be on this journey and the kind of view that macro-society has on it.

Through my Personal Interest Project (PIP), I aim to explore my passion for self-improvement on a deeper level and how closely it is associated with toxic masculinity. Furthermore, I would like to examine what connection stoicism has to toxic masculinity, as they both have stereotypes of hiding emotions, which are not exactly true. I aim to explore the connection between self-improvement and toxic masculinity and how this affects students in all-boy schools, whilst looking at how Stoicism is perceived in society. I believe that self-improvement is being different, not conforming to society and creating personal belief systems based on logic. These new ideas are usually created from viewing popular social media influencers or well-known religions.

The reason I selected this topic is because I have a personal interest in self-improvement and stoicism. I feel like these concepts are misrepresented in society and I want to find out if they really are, and why. They both commonly link to toxic masculinity, which can sometimes be confused with being the same thing, which it is not. Ideas of stoicism include concepts such as controlling how you react to external events and only focusing on what you can control. We can all agree this is not what someone with toxic masculine traits would be doing.

The topic of toxic masculinity and self-improvement contributes to a better understanding of Society and Culture by developing a factual idea of these two concepts that could positively impact society's lifestyle, instead of having them misrepresented and people being wrongly judged for supporting these ideas. To calculate what the current trajectory of society is like, I will be comparing changes from different ages of modern society and also the continuities. There is likely to be

more of a traditional view in older generations, compared to younger people who are quicker to adjust to change and new ideas. I will be comparing the opinions and experiences between males and females, in order to look into whether one has a tougher experience with how society views these concepts.

In order to effectively research this topic, I have used primary and secondary research methods that include: a questionnaire, a personal reflection, an interview, reading many articles and books and listening to podcasts. A questionnaire will help me to gain an insight into what the broader population of northern beaches think about my subject, creating a baseline for society as a whole. Writing a personal reflection applies to my topic area as I have had an experience that fits in exceptionally well with it, this will provide an in-depth exploration into self-improvement and toxic masculinity. With my final research method being an interview, I aim to locate an expert in my topic area who can answer most of my questions and provide a knowledgeable summary of society based on facts and research. In conducting these research methods, I aim to apply ethical practises to gain information whilst also developing my own ability to apply skills in order to help create a healthier environment for society to live in.

## Log

I was interested in self-improvement and Stoicism, due to wanting to change my mindset and life. After it had a significant impact on my life by improving mindset towards one that was purpose driven and mindful, I didn't understand why most people at my age didn't want to undergo self-improvement. This led me to the conclusion that Stoicism is misunderstood and self-improvement is misrepresented in macro society, giving me the passion to further research my pre-existing beliefs and explore the intricacies of these topics. In doing research, I saw the term 'toxic masculinity' appear frequently and being heavily associated with self-improvement and Stoicism, which I initially disagreed with. My disagreement sustained itself throughout my PIP as I gained knowledge into the issue through secondary sources and primary research. This ultimately led to my inquiry question: Is Self-improvement a disguise for toxic masculinity?

In researching for the PIP, it became evident that many influencers had strong, persuasive views that seemed to highlight their purpose of commodification and profit, so I decided to explore this issue. Additionally, in conducting general research, I later discovered an issue of toxic masculinity in an Australian all-boy school which gave me deeper insights into a current social issue in modern society. I became interested in this topic after conducting my research, which later proved to become a problem as I had a lack of primary research with strong links to that specific chapter, forcing me to primarily use secondary resources throughout chapter three. When I became slightly unsure of where the direction of the PIP was going, whether I was stuck with a lack of available research or didn't know what to talk about next, I would read my books on self-improvement or listen to podcasts related to my topic. This method was relatively helpful because I did gain some inspiration, for example, the idea of toxic masculinity in schools was found on a podcast. I would also read articles and websites which provided me with a greater understanding of the specific topic.

Primary research methods were used to gain knowledge of current societal beliefs, which included a questionnaire, an interview and a personal reflection. The

questionnaire consisting of 13 questions and 57 respondents was utilised to gain a broader understanding of society's beliefs and values, both quantitatively and qualitatively. To develop more depth in the PIP, I used an interview with an academic expert named Jane Beeke and personal reflection which allowed for a more qualitative response, not only propelling my knowledge further but gaining an understanding of how others think on a personal level. During the process of creating my PIP, many challenges were encountered and overcome. When looking for an individual to interview, it became difficult to locate an expert on my desired topic due to the fact that few people have a deep understanding of my topic. I interviewed Jane Beake who was a PHD student at The University of Sydney. She provided some helpful insights into the history and details of toxic masculinity, but did not fully answer this part of the PIP.

Through the predominant synthesis of research and the creation of new ideas about my topic, my understanding of personal views grew deeper as some of these were challenged to a great extent. I have learnt how to ethically conduct research and effectively synthesise the data collected, furthermore, my cultural and literacy skills have been enhanced due to being exposed to a diverse range of beliefs people have about Stoicism and self-improvement.

# Chapter 1

## Self Harm Influencers

Many people online preach 'positive' notions of self-improvement, most commonly to younger teens trying to find themselves in society. In today's society, individuals globally use social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook to convey worldviews and ideologies. It is the most efficient method to spread our thoughts and ideas, and people are taking control of this power in both a negative and positive way by feeding susceptible teens new ideas that sound 'good'.

The impact of social media influencers must be considered on impressionable, young teenagers. The Cambridge Dictionary defines these influencers as, "someone who affects or changes the way that other people behave<sup>1</sup>." However, the Oxford Dictionary specifies this concept a little clearer; "A person who has become well-known through use of the internet and social media, and uses celebrity to endorse, promote, or generate interest in specific products, brands, etc., often for payment<sup>2</sup>". In this definition, we can see that an influencer is someone with status who creates popularity around a product, usually because they are being sponsored by this product. Using these two definitions, we can identify individuals in our own lives who could be influencers to ourselves and others.

Now that we can identify influencers in our lives, what about those that promote self-improvement? Self-improvement is a term that seems so simple but it actually carries a lot of complications and misperceptions. Self-improvement is a relatively new concept in our society that many people have used globally, with the goal of bettering themselves in some way. It is usually done through adapting healthy habits into our lives and staying committed. However, it is entirely a personal project, so it can be done in any way desirable. To be clear about a subject, we should look at definitions created by experts, Cambridge dictionary defines

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<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, 'Influencer' (@CambridgeWords5 June 2024)  
<<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/influencer>> accessed 6 May 2024.

<sup>2</sup> 'Influencer, N. Meanings, Etymology and More | Oxford English Dictionary' [2023] Oed.com  
<[https://www.oed.com/dictionary/influencer\\_n?tl=true](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/influencer_n?tl=true)> accessed 6 May 2024.

self-improvement as “the activity of learning new things on your own that makes you a more skilled or able person.”<sup>3</sup>

But what actually is the effect of self-improvement influencers on society and why does it matter? These influencers quite often give us a structure and plan for what our lives should look like to live to our fullest potential. These structures could look like minute-by-minute plans or general goals for the day. It is clear that we need balance to live a healthy life, however, this allows me and others in society to question whether these guidelines are healthy. We look at the outcome that is promised after all this hard work and tell ourselves that it must be worth it. Or could this just be a dream, a false promise that we are endlessly chasing? An article by Perceptiontrainers talks about this in great detail, “With that, we’re coming to see how a LOT of these people have been selling a dream that was just that - a dream. Not real. A fantasy.”<sup>4</sup>

They describe this self-improvement goal as “not real” and “a dream”, that individuals are just being manipulated for their money and the goal being pitched is fake. The article discusses how influencers “*tell us that they can teach us how to get the same results if we just join their program/mastermind/coaching*”.<sup>5</sup>

From their perspective, it seems like a scam for influencers to make money, through people buying their course, again pitching a fake idea. However, it was ironic how they had their course at the bottom of the article doing the exact thing they were telling us not to sign up for.

This is just one viewpoint of self-improvement influencers that is negative. To gain insight into the broader perspective, a questionnaire was conducted. Firstly, it concluded that 88% of people thought that self-improvement was a positive notion in our society. Furthermore, all of these people provided positive experiences with

<sup>3</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, ‘Self-Improvement’ (@CambridgeWords5 June 2024)

<<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/self-improvement>> accessed 7 May 2024.

<sup>4</sup> perceptiontrainers, ‘Are Spiritual/Self Help Influencers HELPING the World or HURTING the World?’ (Perception Trainers2023)

<<https://perceptiontrainers.com/are-spiritual-self-help-influencers-helping-the-world-or-hurting-the-world/>> accessed 11 June 2024.

<sup>5</sup> perceptiontrainers, ‘Are Spiritual/Self Help Influencers HELPING the World or HURTING the World?’ (Perception Trainers2023)

<<https://perceptiontrainers.com/are-spiritual-self-help-influencers-helping-the-world-or-hurting-the-world/>> accessed 11 June 2024.

self-improvement, “An extremely beneficial thing for all men - progress is in our nature” and “My Self-improvement experience helped me build confidence and self-esteem, while also allowing me to become more independent<sup>6</sup>”. There were many more positive statements which further implies that most people think self-improvement is a positive concept. But if self-improvement is positive on its own, does the word influencer make it worse? Or does it enhance this concept? My questionnaire was split relatively evenly on whether self-improvement influencers had a positive or negative effect on society. Some people had positive ideas like “My opinions are very high of them as it should be” and “Yes, I believe they have a positive impact on people, especially young men.”<sup>7</sup> Whereas others weren’t so kind, “I think it’s just scummy as they often promote their guides and selling tips<sup>8</sup>” and “not always convincing as it is easy for people to hide behind a screen and portray their life and self-improvement as something that it isn’t.”<sup>9</sup> It is evident that there is mixed opinions in our society between whether self-improvement influencers are good or bad. Is something as big as this so simple? Does it have to be either a good thing or a bad thing? I believe that it is both. We all know that there are ‘good’ people and ‘bad’ people in the world, some have stronger morals than others. This is reflected in influencers. Some have positive intentions and are creating content because they genuinely want to help other people to improve. An example of this is Jay Shetty, a British author who also releases podcasts weekly on ‘On Purpose’. It is clear from his podcast that he wants what’s best for individuals in society because of how he carries himself and gives so much knowledge for free. Then there are more well-known negative influencers like Andrew Tate who has strong masculine opinions which are debatable and referred to as ‘toxic’.

These influencers have great power over teen adolescents, usually males, as they can easily plant values and perspectives in these young individuals' lives. Having these exterior values and worldviews can be extremely unhealthy to those who are in the process of forming their own identity because they haven’t come up with them themselves. Millions of teens are viewing this type of content globally and many of them are adopting foreign ideologies that can mislead them from their true identity.

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<sup>6</sup>Primary research: Questionnaire conducted 23rd February

<sup>7</sup>Primary research: Questionnaire conducted 23rd February

<sup>8</sup>Primary research: Questionnaire conducted 23rd February

<sup>9</sup>Primary research: Questionnaire conducted 23rd February

## Chapter 2

### “Don’t Be So Stoic”

At the micro level, many misconceptions regarding Stoicism restrain many individuals from living to their potential. These perspectives are based on the simple misunderstanding that stoicism is only the practice of not conveying any emotions. We occasionally hear people say “he’s so stoic’ with a negative connotation when someone shows a lack of emotion. From my personal experience, I believe it is a positive quality to be a Stoic because it involves controlling our emotions and not dwelling on events out of our control<sup>10</sup>. The small difference between the words ‘controlling’ and ‘absence’ actually define completely separate concepts and I am passionate about making this clear to society.

A great stoic philosopher named Marcus Aurelius believed in four important virtues; Courage, temperance, justice and wisdom. These four virtues define Stoicism as a belief system that encourages people to live a life full of purpose and integrity<sup>11</sup>. Ryan Holiday, a preacher of Stoicism, defines it as “a tool in the pursuit of self-mastery, perseverance, and wisdom: something one uses to live a great life”.<sup>12</sup> It is believed that by implementing the four virtues into our lives, these great goals can be achieved. However, a large proportion of society doesn’t view Stoicism in this light, and instead, sees it as a word to describe ‘not showing emotion’. This was observed in a questionnaire conducted when participants were asked what Stoicism meant to them, “not showing your emotions”, “Someone who is a very cold unemotional person who lacks empathy”, “Hiding emotion” and “The ability to ignore emotion to think with logic”.<sup>13</sup> These responses do not correlate with what Ryan describes as Stoicism which accounts for a lack of understanding of the concept.

<sup>10</sup> Primary research: Personal reflection conducted 13th April

<sup>11</sup> Gary Williams, ‘Introduction: In the Vast Tapestry of Human History, Certain Philosophical Principles Have Endured through the Ages, Offering Guidance on How to Lead a Virtuous and Meaningful Life. Stoicism, an Ancient Philosophy Founded in Athens around 300 BC, Stands as One Such Enduring Beacon of Wisdom.’ (*Linkedin.com* 10 October 2023) <[<sup>12</sup> ‘What Is Stoicism? A Definition & 9 Stoic Exercises to Get You Started’ \(\*Daily Stoic\* July 2018\) <\[<sup>13</sup> Primary research: Questionnaire conducted 23rd February\]\(https://dailystoic.com/what-is-stoicism-a-definition-3-stoic-exercises-to-get-you-started/></a> accessed 10 May 2024.</p>
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From my personal experience, Stoicism has transformed my life positively<sup>14</sup>, which is why I believe this misconception needs to be overcome with true understanding and knowledge to transform someone else's life.

While the term 'toxic masculinity' only became used in the 20th century, it had been seen in behaviour for decades before and was unfortunately seen as normal. These 'traditional' beliefs are still very relevant today, a study found that 69% of young men believe that society expects them to act strong and 56% said they are expected to never say no to sex<sup>15</sup>. These are some common beliefs when it comes to toxic masculinity alongside others like being violent, dominant, not displaying enough emotion and sexual aggression towards women<sup>16</sup>. Other common traits of a toxic person were expressed in a questionnaire which included; manipulative, lying, jealousy, abusive, dishonest and controlling<sup>17</sup>. Having these traits being relatively normalised and being seen globally, it can be seen that an almost toxic expectation is being created for men who are desperately trying to fit into society's norms.

There are several similarities between stoicism and toxic masculinity but it is vital to differentiate between the two. In a questionnaire, respondents were asked to measure the correlation between stoicism and toxic masculinity, with 1 being no correlation and 10 being a strong correlation. The results were spread out relatively evenly, with a slight positive skew, conveying the uncertainty among individuals. Participants were then asked to explain their rating, "I feel like a person with toxic masculinity will likely appear stoic, but certainly not the converse. Not every stoic person has toxic masculinity" and "I think stoicism is more about emotional control whereas toxic masculinity is emotional aggression".<sup>18</sup> From these responses, it can be concluded that many people believed that Stoicism and toxic masculinity are different but have similar traits which can easily be confused.

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<sup>14</sup> Primary research: Personal reflection conducted 13th April

<sup>15</sup> Michael Flood, 'Australian Study Reveals the Dangers of "Toxic Masculinity" to Men and Those around Them' (*The Conversation* 16 October 2018)

<<https://theconversation.com/australian-study-reveals-the-dangers-of-toxic-masculinity-to-men-and-those-around-them-104694>> accessed 12 May 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Adam Gallie, 'What Are the Top 10 Toxic Masculinity Behaviors?' (*Aurora* 23 July 2019)

<<https://www.auroraand.org.uk/news/top-10-toxic-masculinity-behaviours>> accessed 12 May 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Primary research: Questionnaire conducted 23rd February

<sup>18</sup> Primary research: Questionnaire conducted 23rd February

Stoicism is misunderstood by those who are uneducated about its true meaning. Phil Van Treuren believes that there is a huge misconception around suppressing our emotions in Stoicism, he says that “Stoics believe in trying to overcome the impact of negative emotions like fear and anger, and experiencing more positive emotions, emotions like happiness and gratitude<sup>19</sup>.” If society researches the philosophy of Stoicism, individuals will realise that they were misunderstood before, and will be able to recognise healthy traits and unhealthy traits much more easily. Society needs to be informed so that more people can celebrate the true value of Stoicism. This lack of knowledge is evident in an interview with a University student, who described Stoicism as “associated with what we could call hegemonic masculinity.” She then says that men are only allowed to show “masculine emotions like anger or indignation” but not show “grief or confusion”. All of these traits are what toxic masculinity looks like, but not Stoicism. The two are so easily confused as they hide negative emotions, and typically, Stoic people limit their display of emotion in general. People with a Stoic mindset are on the road to improving their mental fortitude and becoming happier, which is why society must gain a deeper understanding of it.

Stoicism is so wrongfully thought about because it carries some extremely similar traits to toxic masculinity and that those who briefly read about it, instantly attach it to toxic masculinity and then never look at it again. It is then spread by society telling people they’re so ‘Stoic’ whenever they see one that hides emotions. In my personal reflection, this was evident, someone knew that I was going through a difficult time but couldn’t see my emotions, so they called me “Stoic”<sup>20</sup>. Mathew Duncombe, a specialised Greek philosopher, says that “Stoic TikTok, a popular social media platform, often misinterprets its ideas”.<sup>21</sup> He then says that “its ideas around happiness and productivity diverge quite a bit from what modern people consider it to be.” As so many young people are frequent users of TikTok, we can see that this could be a common place where misconceptions are born, such as

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Four Common Myths & Misconceptions about Stoicism’ (*Stoic Simple* |28 October 2023) <<https://www.stoicsimple.com/four-common-misconceptions-about-stoicism/>> accessed 23 May 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Primary research: Personal reflection conducted 13th April

<sup>21</sup> SeventhQueen, ‘What Modern People Get Wrong about Stoicism | Empirics Asia’ (*Empirics Asia* |27 November 2023) <<https://empirics.asia/what-modern-people-get-wrong-about-stoicism/>> accessed 26 May 2024.

“simply reading quotations” or “meditating on death” which is not enjoyed by most users without any context.<sup>22</sup>

This suggests that our society has a misconception of Stoicism that is inaccurate and marginalises those who truly believe in it, creating an unnecessary divide at the macro level. Therefore this creates an ignorant society that is unaware of the benefits of Stoicism and will continue to live unfulfilled lives, leaving potential behind them that could change the world. Others commonly look down upon those who believe in Stoicism because they think that ‘they show no emotion’ and then dismiss the individual.<sup>23</sup> A deeper understanding of Stoicism is vital to our society, knowledge needs to be spread.

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<sup>22</sup> SeventhQueen, ‘What Modern People Get Wrong about Stoicism | Empirics Asia’ (*Empirics Asia* 27 November 2023) <<https://empirics.asia/what-modern-people-get-wrong-about-stoicism/>> accessed 27 May 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Chris Fisher, ‘Exploring Encheiridion 5 (Part II) – Episode 36’ (*Traditional Stoicism* 8 September 2021) <<https://traditionalstoicism.com/exploring-encheiridion-5-part-ii-episode-36/>> accessed 29 July 2024.

## Chapter 3

### Men Don't Cry

During our childhoods, we spend over 6 hours a day at school in an environment that can be very pressurising. From my personal experience, I have observed this environment firsthand, teens have to manage assignments, friends, social pressures, homework and much more all at school<sup>24</sup>. A study showed that almost 50% of young Australians feel extremely or very stressed about the lead-up to studying and exams and a further 66% feel stressed about their future<sup>25</sup>. The stress of the school environment can lead to peer conflict and result in toxic behaviour manifesting as students feel the pressure to conform, banding together to form echo chambers that reinforce worldviews. This negates individuality from our identity and also creates unnecessary conflict which negatively impacts mental health.

School can evidently provide a large amount of pressure for students to perform academically, but what about the aspect of socialisation? Erik Erikson's theory of development explains that adolescents will face crises that they must overcome which then impacts their identity development. During adolescence, teens face the stage known as 'identity vs identity confusion' where they are challenged to explore their identity. If there are many expectations and responsibilities at this stage, identity might not be clearly established leading to confusion towards their purpose. As teens find their own identity, they look towards others to gain a sense of belonging, a fundamental need of humans<sup>26</sup>. This need for belonging can become so strong that individuals change their own identity and belief systems just to fit in, this concept is commonly known as 'conformity'. During an interview with academic expert Jane Beeke, she explained, "[Social conformity] occurs because people want to be accepted by others and don't want to look like the loner<sup>27</sup>". From my personal

<sup>24</sup> Primary research: Personal reflection conducted 13th April

<sup>25</sup> 'Study Stress Impacting Students' Mental Health, Sleep and Relationships according to New Research by ReachOut' (*About ReachOut Australia*2022)

<<https://about.au.reachout.com/blog/study-stress-impacting-students----mental-health--sleep-and-relationships-according-to-new-research-by-reachout>> accessed 5 June 2024.

<sup>26</sup> 'Peer Pressure or Influence: Pre-Teens and Teenagers' (*Raising Children Network*3 November 2021)

<<https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/behaviour/peers-friends-trends/peer-influence#:~:text=Having%20friends%20and%20feeling%20connected,people's%20thoughts%2C%20feelings%20and%20wellbeing.>> accessed 7 June 2024.

<sup>27</sup> Primary research: Interview conducted 26th March

experience, this conformity can be identified every day at school, usually in an unhealthy way that either puts others down or draws us away from individual identity<sup>28</sup>. Toxic behaviour in the form of masculinity can be a result of this conformity, having a severe impact on society's younger generations. This is created because individuals seek belonging from friends and strongly value their opinions and judgement, but do not value the opinions or feelings of others because they do not feel that they need to belong to everyone in the world. A lack of empathy and selfishness is evident here, resulting in negative actions and negative relationships with others. As this occurs each day in schools, students are not appreciating each other which will eventually lead to isolation and fake friendships that are built from fake values and actions.

But how prevalent is toxic behaviour in schools? In a questionnaire, participants were asked to share their experiences with toxic masculinity. The results revealed that 43% of participants had experienced it before, these participants were almost completely females. Interestingly, the other half that hadn't experienced toxic masculinity before were mostly males<sup>29</sup>. This accounts for the lack of understanding males may have about the negative effects caused by toxic masculinity, a matter that society needs to reflect on to become healthier. This lack of understanding could be a clear reason as to why toxic masculinity remains prevalent in society. Furthermore, participants gave evidence of their experiences, "[Toxic masculinity is] Often [found] around big groups of boys being influenced by each other" and "When men resort to violence to prove themselves to friends or to their wife /girlfriend. Men who degrade women in conversation again to make themselves look 'good' to others<sup>30</sup>". Toxic masculinity can be found everywhere, however, it is commonly disguised as 'banta' or 'fun' with friends.

Toxic masculinity in all-boys private schools has been highlighted in the media due to its negative influence. Several incidents involving a group of schoolboys displaying toxic behaviour have occurred in recent years. In one case, students were dared to spit on a homeless man and other sexual activities to complete a set

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<sup>28</sup> Primary research: Personal reflection conducted 13th April

<sup>29</sup> Primary research: Questionnaire conducted 23rd February

<sup>30</sup> Primary research: Questionnaire conducted 23rd February

of challenges in celebration of completing high school<sup>31</sup>. In another, Cranbrook students were embroiled in numerous sexual assault complaints against young female teachers and even intoxication with rape<sup>32</sup>. These are just a few of the many extreme cases of toxic behaviour performed by students in Australia. Due to these incidents being outlined by the media, school Headmasters are looking inward to prevent this awful behaviour from occurring so that their school remains successful. Some schools, for example; Barker College, Cranbrook and Ashfield Boys High School<sup>33</sup>, are moving towards a co-ed environment in an attempt to change the toxic traits exhibited by students, and to encourage society to view their school positively again. They believe that bringing female students to the school will increase current students' respect for women and create a more inclusive environment for students to learn in.

It could however be argued that the problem will not stop here, once a culture is created, it can not easily be changed. This creates a large problem in society of children being forced into a toxic environment every day so that they can obtain an education. An environment like this will have a net negative impact on every staff member and student. In Steven Bartlett's book 'The Diary Of A Ceo - The 33 Laws of Business and Life' he refers to a study conducted by *Harvard Business Review* which found that employees were 37% more likely to commit misconduct when they encountered someone who committed misconduct in the past<sup>34</sup>. This study emphasises the social need to belong and conform even to toxic behaviour and how it spreads throughout an environment. The example used was set in a workplace, however, the concept can be applied to a school with younger students who have a stronger need to belong, most likely increasing the percentage of misconduct.

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<sup>31</sup> Alexis Carey, 'Elite School's Sick "Manifesto" Exposed' (*news*24 September 2020) <<https://www.news.com.au/finance/shore-school-muckup-day-sydney-school-hunts-for-culprits-behind-scandal/news-story/10dad66268c6aa02c332797b2bc145ff>> accessed 8 July 2024.

<sup>32</sup> Natassia Chrysanthos, "'Pretty Dark Culture": Sydney Boys' School Heads Express Regret over Rape Claims' (*The Sydney Morning Herald*22 February 2021) <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/pretty-dark-culture-sydney-boys-school-heads-express-regret-over-rape-claims-20210222-p574pr.html>> accessed 8 July 2024.

<sup>33</sup> Andreea Papuc, 'Australia's All-Boys Schools Must Stamp out Toxic Masculinity' (*Bloomberg.com*13 February 2024) <<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2024-02-13/australia-s-all-boys-schools-must-stamp-out-toxic-masculinity>> accessed 9 July 2024.

<sup>34</sup> Steven Bartlett, *The Diary of A CEO: The 33 Laws of Business and Life*, Ebury Edge, 2023, pg. 304

Ultimately, the school environment can be a place filled with toxic behaviour due to the need to conform, which is breaking down relationships and creating fake friendships. According to CEO and education expert Greg Parry, there are 5 key strategies to consider when creating a healthier school environment: leadership modelling, transparent communication, reinforcing healthy core values, student and staff engagement, and proactively addressing toxic behaviours<sup>35</sup>. Schools must create a healthy culture for students and staff to become more successful in their goals.

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<sup>35</sup> Greg Parry, 'School Culture: Top 5 Strategies for Turning around Toxic Culture - Global Services in Education' (*Global Services In Education* 3 April 2024) <<https://www.gsineducation.com/blog/school-culture-top-5-strategies-for-turning-around-toxic-culture>> accessed 12 July 2024.

## Conclusion

This PIP aimed to explore the effect that the relationship that self-improvement and toxic masculinity have on individuals in society, both through media influencers and in all-boy schools, which led to the idea of Stoicism being misrepresented in society. Through exploring these topics, I have gained a deeper understanding of toxic masculinity and Stoicism, finding that many individuals associate these two concepts as being interrelated and impacting each other, which was proved to be incorrect by a variety of experts whilst conducting secondary research. The reason for this was the similar traits, being a perceived lack of emotion, involved with both concepts, causing people with a shallow understanding to think they are identical notions when they are not. I have learned that knowledge and self-improvement has significant value and that independent thinking is healthier than blindly following others that may be toxic because society's values might not align with how you truly feel.

My hypothesis was ultimately proven to be correct as I discovered the misrepresentation of Stoicism globally and that self-improvement influencers can have a negative impact on the identity of adolescents due to their power and the plasticity of teens' brains. My questionnaire consolidated my thinking as peoples' beliefs reflected incorrect ideas of Stoicism which did not correlate with the secondary research findings and expert opinion. Secondary research was the key to developing my PIP and reaching my final conclusions as it challenged much of my primary research, by backing ideas up with research and experience over many years. It challenged this research by considering copious amounts of historical evidence regarding Stoicism and in Chapter 3, viewing recent news reports that highlighted the impact of toxic masculinity in an educational environment.

This investigation was highly relevant in modern society as it is paramount that globally, people recognise the key differences between toxic masculinity and Stoicism/self-improvement so that they can implement these positive ideologies into their lives and embark on the road to fulfilment. As the media is extremely prevalent in a globalised world, it remains important to consciously reflect on our thoughts and

relationships to escape toxic behaviour and live healthy lives. After reflection, primary research could have been conducted more efficiently. This includes, managing time better by organising my interview earlier and creating my questionnaire earlier, performing greater amounts of secondary research before conducting my primary research to obtain more accurate data. Furthermore, my greatest challenge in creating this PIP was putting in time to work on it. I found this challenging because other immediate pieces of work would take priority over the PIP and I would work on that, impacting the crucial blocks of time that I could allocate to work on the PIP.

This PIP has the power to challenge society's values and beliefs regarding self-improvement, toxic masculinity and Stoicism, inviting readers to reflect on their personal paradigms and consciously change them for the better. Stoicism and self-improvement have been marginalised from society for too long and deserve to be as important as other belief systems and ideologies globally. It's time we reinvent how Stoicism and self-improvement are portrayed globally so that millions of people can reap the rewards of following these beautiful concepts and live happier lives.

## **Annotated Reference List**

### **Primary Resources:**

#### ***Interview - conducted March 26th 2024***

My interview was a reasonably helpful part of my PIP process as it allowed me to gain a greater understanding into my topic area after listening to an expert talk in-depth about toxic masculinity and the ability to ask follow up questions if needed. Qualitative questions were thoughtfully created, relating to my topic area and relevant course concepts in order to link back to the syllabus, provoking answers that related fittingly to my PIP and were able to be answered in depth.

Unfortunately, due to slightly changing my topic areas, the answers given became slightly irrelevant to what I was writing about which led to a lack this research method throughout my PIP. In order to ensure research was conducted ethically, I asked the interviewee if it were okay for me to record the interview, I also ensured that my personal opinion was negated from the conversation in order to eradicate possible personal bias. This helped me to really acknowledge the other perspective I was listening to and understand new ideas.

In order to improve this research method I could have found a participant with a greater knowledge in my area, as the selected interviewee wasn't a pronounced expert on my PIP, this would have taken longer and required better time management from myself. I also could have continuously swerved the interview back to my PIP each time it became sidetracked into irrelevant subjects.

Overall, this Interview provided me with limited information relating to my PIP, presenting me with qualitative information that I was able to analyse and synthesise into quotes that would later be used within my chapters.

#### ***Personal Reflection - conducted April 13th***

My personal reflection remained a vital research method throughout my PIP as it allowed me to reflect on my own personal experiences and beliefs. As an

adolescent living in modern western society, I was able to convey my experiences on a micro, meso and macro level in a way that correlated to my topic and provided further evidence in my discussion. In creating this research method, I was able to identify where several of my key beliefs originated from, allowing me to gain a greater understanding of not only myself, but also the significance of our experiences as an adolescent. I was able to link personal experiences with experiences of others and secondary research in order to triangulate my research and have it all correlate towards an outcome.

A disadvantage of this research method is that my personal experience is only specific to one person, which doesn't represent society in any way. I can give my views on society, however, this will most likely not be the same as views of the whole making this personal reflection a resource for specific examples in the PIP. I have a pre-existing bias towards my topic areas which gives a one-sided viewpoint of society and therefore is deemed unreliable if it were the only research method. However, it was useful to add in personal specific examples into my PIP to reinforce values that others also held.

Overall, this was a crucial research method throughout my PIP process, giving the PIP access to strong qualitative data that integrated a personal voice and reflected a micro opinion.

#### ***Questionnaire - 57 respondents, distributed February 23rd 2024***

My questionnaire was an essential part of my primary research as it allowed me to gather quantitative and qualitative opinions at both a micro and meso level, whilst effectively analysing the differences between Generation Z and Generation X. The questionnaire was made up of 13 questions, from Likert scales to long answer responses which provided me with a wide range of ideas and perspectives about my topic. Data was assumed fairly reliable as it comprised 57 random respondents from a wide range of ages, however, to gain more reliable results, more respondents would be needed to give a macro society view.

A challenge that I encountered was finding individuals of a diverse age range to

participate in my questionnaire, in order to gain more accurate results. This became a problem due to my lack of network, only having connections with people around my age and not many with baby boomers and such. One disadvantage in the questionnaire was the lack of thoughtful answers given by those not bothered to thoroughly think about the questions, therefore many answers lacked depth and were not considered when selecting quotes.

Overall, my questionnaire provided me with sufficient data relating to my topic, giving me a information about a macro outlook of society towards my specific topic. I was able to identify trends and patterns and also perceive others opinions, ultimately increasing my social and cultural literacy.

## Secondary Resources:

**Andreea Papuc, 'Australia's All-Boys Schools Must Stamp out Toxic Masculinity' (Bloomberg.com 13 February 2024)**

<<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2024-02-13/australia-s-all-boys-schools-must-stamp-out-toxic-masculinity>>

Andreea Papuc is a Bloomberg opinion editor who is passionate about sharing contemporary issues with the world. In this article, she talks about the current problem in Australian all-boy schools with toxic masculinity embedded in their culture, whilst expressing the illegal sexual acts committed by students. Andreea includes a diverse range of secondary sources in her discussion in order to create a comprehensive overview of the situation at the macro level. She concludes that it is the right decision for schools to be moving away from single gender and towards coed culture where a calmer environment will be present. This article clearly relates to my PIP as it discusses toxic masculinity as a significant problem faced in all-boy schools, whilst including concepts of conformity and social peer pressure. It remained essential throughout chapter three as it clearly linked to the entire chapter, allowing me to gain an insight into contemporary issues in modern society and the immediate problems inside private schools.

**Carey A, 'Elite School's Sick "Manifesto" Exposed' (news24 September 2020)**

<<https://www.news.com.au/finance/shore-school-muckup-day-sydney-school-hunts-for-culprits-behind-scandal/news-story/10dad66268c6aa02c332797b2bc145ff>>

Alexis Carey is an experienced reporter who graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Arts and Media and Communications. In this article, she outlines the events that took place during the school 'Shore's' muck-up day in which students created a scavenger hunt of illegal activities in order to celebrate the end of high school. First-hand evidence from a document connected with the police was used in this article, giving it a strong reliability. Alexis explores all items in the scavenger hunt and the response given by the headmaster, ultimately, inviting the reader to think about the current issue in all-boy private schools. This article was an

important part of my PIP process as it presented a current issue regarding my topic area, which became very useful to my writing and also provided me with greater knowledge of the toxic culture built by some private schools. Overall, this source was extremely interesting and significantly aided chapter three of my PIP.

**Dredge M, 'Is Stoicism Representative of "Toxic Masculinity?" - Original Philosophy - Medium' (*Medium* 4 November 2023)**

<<https://medium.com/original-philosophy/is-stoicism-really-representative-of-toxic-masculinity-cef92f1559ae>>

This website explored the question of stoic ideology being a representative of toxic masculinity. The author 'Marcus Dredge' talked about the roots of stoicism, coming from a brilliant thinker known as 'Epictetus' who was brought up as a slave. He goes on to talk about how stoicism is closely associated with a lack of emotions, which if taken to extremes of feeling no emotions, is how toxic masculinity can be attached to it. He claims that critics such as The American Psychological Association stated that "stoicism constitutes toxic masculinity". However, this person is not reliable due to their low social status and lack of known qualifications. There was no bias presented throughout the article as he only discussed concepts and gave no personal opinions.

**Flood M, 'Australian Study Reveals the Dangers of "Toxic Masculinity" to Men and Those around Them' (*The Conversation* 16 October 2018)**

<<https://theconversation.com/australian-study-reveals-the-dangers-of-toxic-masculinity-to-men-and-those-around-them-104694>>

The author, Michael Flood, is a professor of sociology at the University of Technology in Queensland who has conducted profound research on men, masculinity and gender. In this article, he outlines many statistics relating to young men and that these young men are heavily influenced by the idea of how a man should act. Michael's research is aimed at these young men, trying to reach and educate them so that they don't suffer as one of his disturbing statistics any longer.

His statistics from a variety of secondary sources are a way of providing individuals with modern data which is designed to shock them and encourage them to make some change towards a healthier lifestyle. The main message is that awareness needs to be created about the harms of conforming to society's expectations of masculinity and instead promote healthy alternatives to traditional masculinity ideals. This text was extremely reliable as there was little personal bias and mostly research in the form of statistics which helped the reader to see the real time impact on young men. This real impact was incorporated into my PIP as I deemed it extremely relevant to my topic on toxic masculinity in all-boy schools, which gave me great statistics to use in the PIP, ultimately providing evidence for this issue. Overall, this article was a major help to my PIP as it allowed me to expand my understanding and knowledge of the social expectations in society, whilst enabling me to link back to my core topic of toxic masculinity.

**'Four Common Myths & Misconceptions about Stoicism'** (*Stoic Simple* |28 October 2023) <<https://www.stoicsimple.com/four-common-misconceptions-about-stoicism/>>

Phil Van Treuren is an author and entrepreneur with an interest in Stoicism. In this article, he discusses several misconceptions about Stoicism, correcting the incorrect myths and proving them incorrect with logic. He explores the phrase 'Pseudo-Stoicism' as a concept that most people think modern Stoicism is, one that is altered by social media. Phil aims to attract those interested in Stoicism through his strong personal opinion and views that would typically oppose many people. He concluded that there are four misconceptions regarding Stoicism; showing no emotion, withdrawing from society, it's a religion and that money and possessions are bad. These misconceptions were extremely helpful for my PIP process as I recognised many of these misconceptions valued by participants in my questionnaire, allowing me to conclude that society has a false concept of Stoicism. This article is slightly reliable as the author clearly has a vast history of Stoicism and a great amount of knowledge, however, he predominantly uses personal opinion with a lack of any research. This article was vital in making connections in my PIP as it gave a relatively unique perspective that few individuals spoke about online,

allowing me to gain a better understanding of Stoicism through a distinctive paradigm.

**Gallie A, 'What Are the Top 10 Toxic Masculinity Behaviors?' (Aurora23 July 2019)**

<<https://www.aurorand.org.uk/news/top-10-toxic-masculinity-behaviours>>

Adam Gallie is an ordinary dad who is eager to eliminate the fear that woman can experience around violence in order to create a safer world for those woman close to him, including his daughter. In this article, he outlines 10 behaviours that are signs of toxic masculinity so that we can spot toxic people in our lives. He primarily aims to reach out to woman who may have someone like this in their lives or anyone who wants to be able to recognise a toxic individual in their lives. He does this by giving his personal opinion which has been created by experience and possibly slight secondary research. However, there is a lack of research in this article which makes it unreliable as it could be bias, furthermore, Adam is not qualified in this topic which emphasises his lack of experience and knowledge. This article was slightly useful as I was able to recognise several traits of toxic masculinity and compare them to those mentioned in my primary research, giving me an accurate representation of society's views as a collective.

**Karl J and others, 'Misunderstood Stoicism: The Negative Association between Stoic Ideology and Well-Being' (ResearchGate12 August 2022)**

<[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362659377\\_Misunderstood\\_Stoicism\\_The\\_negative\\_Association\\_Between\\_Stoic\\_Ideology\\_and\\_well-Being](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362659377_Misunderstood_Stoicism_The_negative_Association_Between_Stoic_Ideology_and_well-Being)>

This article explores the negative association between stoicism and human well-being. It has helped me to understand this topic and helped me decide whether it's something I would like to research for my PIP. The article took research from 3 different countries and the results showed that each country had an equal association between stoicism and mental health, and this association was a negative one. The article was from a reliable source that is a journal article that had been peer-reviewed by other academics in the field, it was unbiased because it

solely used results to come to conclusions without any standing opinions. After reading this article, I now have a base of knowledge about how parts of the world view stoicism, which will help me to gain a greater understanding of this topic.

**(*Linkedin.com* 10 October 2023)**

<<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/four-virtues-stoicism-roadmap-meaningful-life-gary-williams#:~:text=The%20Stoic%20virtues%20of%20Courage,actions%2C%20decisions%2C%20and%20character>>

This source explored the virtues of Stoicism and why they are essential in our lives. Gary Williams, the author, is a qualified hypnotherapist and life coach who is passionate about helping others move past their struggles through personal growth. He describes the brief history of philosophy and outlines the four virtues associated with Stoicism, helping the reader to practically apply them to their own life. The intended audience is those who are interested in learning more about Stoicism or those on the journey of self help who gain understanding as Gary offers his personal opinion and evident secondary research, making this source relatively reliable. This article was helpful for me to understand the four virtue in greater detail so that I could apply them to my PIP and share what it really means to be a Stoic.

**Natassia Chrysanthos, ““Pretty Dark Culture”: Sydney Boys’ School Heads Express Regret over Rape Claims’ (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 22 February 2021)**

<<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/pretty-dark-culture-sydney-boys-school-heads-express-regret-over-rape-claims-20210222-p574pr.html>>

Natassia Chrysanthos is the federal health reporter for The Sydney Morning Herald. In this article she discusses sexually inappropriate acts towards teachers and other peers at all-boy private schools. The target audience for this source is predominantly female teachers who are looking for a new school to work at, encouraging them to reflect on their decision. Natassia uses quotes from school principals and police reports to present her discussion with little to no personal points, creating a clear reliability. This text remained vital throughout chapter three of my PIP, as I was able to link current issues with my topic, allowing me to signify

the relevance of my PIP with modern society. Furthermore, this article allowed me to increase my knowledge of current issues relating to Australian private schools, ultimately increasing my social and cultural literacy towards modern society.

**‘Peer Pressure or Influence: Pre-Teens and Teenagers’ (*Raising Children Network*3 November 2021)**

<<https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/behaviour/peers-friends-trends/peer-influence#:~:text=Having%20friends%20and%20feeling%20connected,people%27s%20thoughts%2C%20feelings%20and%20wellbeing>>

This article focuses on the effect of peer pressure experienced by young adults during social interactions. The creators of the article is a website that aims to help parents understand what their children are going through so that they can help and support them through the journey of adolescence. This source is extremely formal and describes each concept in detail, highlighting the evident knowledge contained by the author. It gives facts and advice to parents who may be unaware of peer pressure in children and also practical advice that individuals can apply to their lives. A lack of primary research is evident in this article, however there is clear, concise information which is evidence for secondary research. Furthermore, this website is supported by the Australian government, making it a reliable source that can be trusted and used effectively to increase knowledge. Overall, this article actively helped my PIP process as I gained an insight into the struggles of peer pressure experienced frequently in schools, allowing me to apply this knowledge to my third chapter of toxic masculinity in schools.

**perceptiontrainers, ‘Are Spiritual/Self Help Influencers HELPING the World or HURTING the World?’ (*Perception Trainers*2023)**

<<https://perceptiontrainers.com/are-spiritual-self-help-influencers-helping-the-world-or-hurting-the-world/>>

This article discussed the negative effect that self help influencers can have on individuals in society. The author, Aliyah Washington, is passionate about self help

and self love and expresses this interest in creating articles and providing self-love teaching to those who are willing. She discusses that social media is 'fake' and that we are being sold an unreachable dream by controlling influencers. Aliyah also explains the significance of social media in society because it provides us with free education, however false or misleading. The target audience is individuals who actively use social media and more specifically those who are interested in self help, she is trying to reach these people because she is selling her personal course to them. No research methods were present in the article except for personal opinion as this article is generally casual, which doesn't support both sides to her discussion making it slightly unreliable. She concludes that these negative self help influencers are contributing to consumerism and an endless cycle that victims are going through of buying and being hard on themselves for negative consequences. This article was helpful for gaining a new perspective of the self-improvement influencers in society which strongly linked to my first chapter and the concept of power.

**SeventhQueen, 'What Modern People Get Wrong about Stoicism | Empirics Asia'**  
(*Empirics Asia* 27 November 2023)

<https://empirics.asia/what-modern-people-get-wrong-about-stoicism/>

This article explores the concept of 'Stoic TikTok' which commonly falsely represents Stoicism as a whole. As such a large amount of people excessively use social media platforms such as TikTok in modern society, this is unfortunately the only place where they obtain anything to do with Stoicism. The author, Matthew Duncombe, aims to teach those users of TikTok what Stoicism is really about and the negative portrayals that the social media platform showcases. This article is fairly reliable as it utilises a variety of secondary sources and also strong personal experiences, implementing examples from his life to prove his point. Matthew's opinions gave me a greater understanding into how social media can promote false information, connecting a relevance with two of my chapters. Overall, this article increased my knowledge of Stoicism and the effect of social media on it, enabling me to comprehend the two sides to how Stoicism is viewed.

Sheppard, S. (2023) *The dangers of toxic masculinity*, *Verywell Mind*. Available at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-dangerous-mental-health-effects-of-toxic-masculinity-5073957>

This article discusses toxic masculinity and its effects. The author, Sarah Sheppard, is a writer who is interested in mental health, however, the factor that makes this article reliable is that it has been medically reviewed by a psychiatrist named Carly Snyder. The author defines toxic masculinity as a concept that describes 'unhealthy and often traditional characteristics or attributes associated with men'. The author continues saying that men are frequently mislabelled with these 'outdated' terms that creates an 'unrealistic understand of what it means to be a man' in today's society. She then goes on to say that the belief of toxic masculinity has a negative impact on society, as some young males continue to try and live up to these harmful expectations such as keeping emotions bottled up. The author then says that the effects of toxic masculinity can be: domestic abuse, gender-based violence, gun violence, homophobia and misogyny. I believe that there could be a bias in this article as the author referred to her opinion more frequently than actual facts. This article has shown me a female's perspective about toxic masculinity which I haven't heard before which has increased my understanding of toxic masculinity as a whole.

**'Study Stress Impacting Students' Mental Health, Sleep and Relationships according to New Research by ReachOut' (About ReachOut Australia2022)**

<<https://about.au.reachout.com/blog/study-stress-impacting-students---mental-health--sleep-and-relationships-according-to-new-research-by-reachout>>

This source discussed a variety of studies completed about the effects of stress in school on the mental health of year 12 students. It is directed towards year 12 students who may be struggling with stress from study and other areas of school. The article outlines the devastating impact a neglected mental health can have on our mood and lifestyle, especially in the lead up to exams, giving multiple examples of studies performed across Australia. These research methods make this source clearly accurate and reliable as there is no personal opinion, only facts. The reader is encouraged to view the shocking statistics and become inspired to make a

change in how they approach their mental health, whilst gaining knowledge on the effect of year 12 exams. This source related to my third chapter relating to toxic masculinity in schools as I looked into why there is such a toxic environment in the first place, which I found was highly likely due to stress. Overall, I gained great insight into the effects of stress on adolescents, allowing me to make connections between stress and toxic masculinity.

**Tavian Jean-Pierre, ‘The Dark Side of Male Self-Improvement | ILLUMINATION’**  
(*Medium* 25 September 2021)

<<https://medium.com/illumination/the-dark-side-of-male-self-improvement-76d187589dbc>>

This article talked about a movement that has plagued the web called “Men Go Their Own Way” or MGTOW. It says that millions of men follow this concept of self-improvement, and have 3 main ‘wrong’ ideas: high-value men are wealthy, women only desire high-value men, and success is governed by status. He then lists all of the arguments of following this movement which he is articulating in a negative manner. This author seems to have a disliking to the self-improvement movement and maybe a non-holistic understanding of this subject. This author does not have any credibility which means they could be an average person speaking their mind. There is most definitely a bias in this article as he has not based his findings off of research, but instead his own past experiences. This article is relevant to my research because it is an extreme view of the topic I am discussing, which gives me a greater understanding of the boundaries of this concept.

**‘Modern Stoicism: How to Use Ancient Philosophy to Perfect Modern Live - Orion Philosophy’** (*Orion Philosophy* 3 June 2020)

<<https://orionphilosophy.com/stoic-philosophy-for-modern-life/>>

This article discussed how stoicism can still be used in the modern world and the key concepts of stoicism. Tobias Weaver presented the four key virtues valued by the stoics, wisdom, temperance, courage and justice and why they are significant.

He then says how important it is to focus on what we can control, instead of what we can't. For example, he says we should take responsibility for thoughts, beliefs and values, and accept things like other people and nature that are out of our control. Weaver then says that even though modern society has very different problems to the original stoics, we can still effectively practise their philosophy using three methods, journaling, meditation and visualisation. This author, Tobias Weaver, has been 'studying philosophy for over a decade' and has a degree in mechanical engineering, making him a semi-reliable source. I think there may have been small sections with bias in, but the majority of this article was based on fact and logic. This has greatly increased my knowledge of stoicism and I can now make an informed decision about whether it could be associated with toxic masculinity.

**'What Is Stoicism? A Definition & 9 Stoic Exercises to Get You Started' (*Daily Stoic* July 2018)**

<https://dailystoic.com/what-is-stoicism-a-definition-3-stoic-exercises-to-get-you-started/>

This article explained everything about Stoicism, from how it began to 9 exercises individuals can utilise to undergo the Stoic mindset. The author Ryan Holiday is an American philosopher who expresses his love of Stoicism in his books and teachings online. Ryan was mentored by Robert Greene, author of 'The 48 Laws of Power' from the age of 19 and then proceeded to create a thriving company and create blogs on important life lessons that he wished others taught him. He was aiming to educate the reader into what Stoicism truly is by giving accurate facts and historical data. This was aimed at those who wanted to increase their knowledge of Stoicism or those merely interested in this topic. This source dramatically increased my knowledge of Stoicism as it contained such detailed information which I then applied to my PIP. The reason for this source being so helpful was due to its evident accuracy towards the truth, an accuracy created by an abundance of secondary research. Overall, this article became a key part in my second chapter on Stoicism as it not only provided me with great insight but also gave a precise definition of Stoicism which I included in my PIP.